

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The claims are 1,4-13, and 16-24. Claim 3, which the Examiner indicated contained allowable subject matter, has been rewritten in independent claim form by amending Claim 1 to include the subject matter of Claim 3 including Claim 2 on which Claim 3 previously depended. Accordingly, Claims 2 and 3 have been cancelled. In addition, Claim 15, which the Examiner also indicated contained allowable subject matter, has been rewritten in independent claim form by amending Claim 13 to include the subject matter of Claim 15 and Claim 14 on which Claim 15 previously depended. Accordingly, Claim 14 and 15 have likewise been cancelled. The remaining claims and claims 1 and 13 have been amended to remove reference numerals. Reconsideration is expressly requested.

Claims 1, 2, 4-14 and 16-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Ahlen* (US 5,767,975) in view of *Tsikos et al* (US 5,013,297). The Examiner has indicated, however, that claims 3 and 15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent claim form including the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, in order to expedite the proceedings, Applicants have amended Claim 1 and 13 to incorporate the subject matter of Claims 3 (including Claim 2) and 15 (including Claim 14) respectively and have cancelled Claims 2, 3, 14 and 15 so that all claims now depend directly or indirectly on Claims 1 or 13 as amended.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that all claims are now in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request that these amendments be entered.

In summary, Claims 1, 4-13 and 16-24 have been amended, and Claims 2, 3, 14 and 15 have been cancelled. In view of the foregoing, withdrawal of the Final Action and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

JUERGEN EISEN ET AL

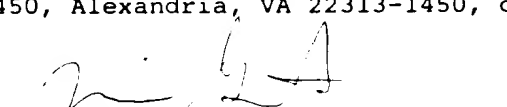
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